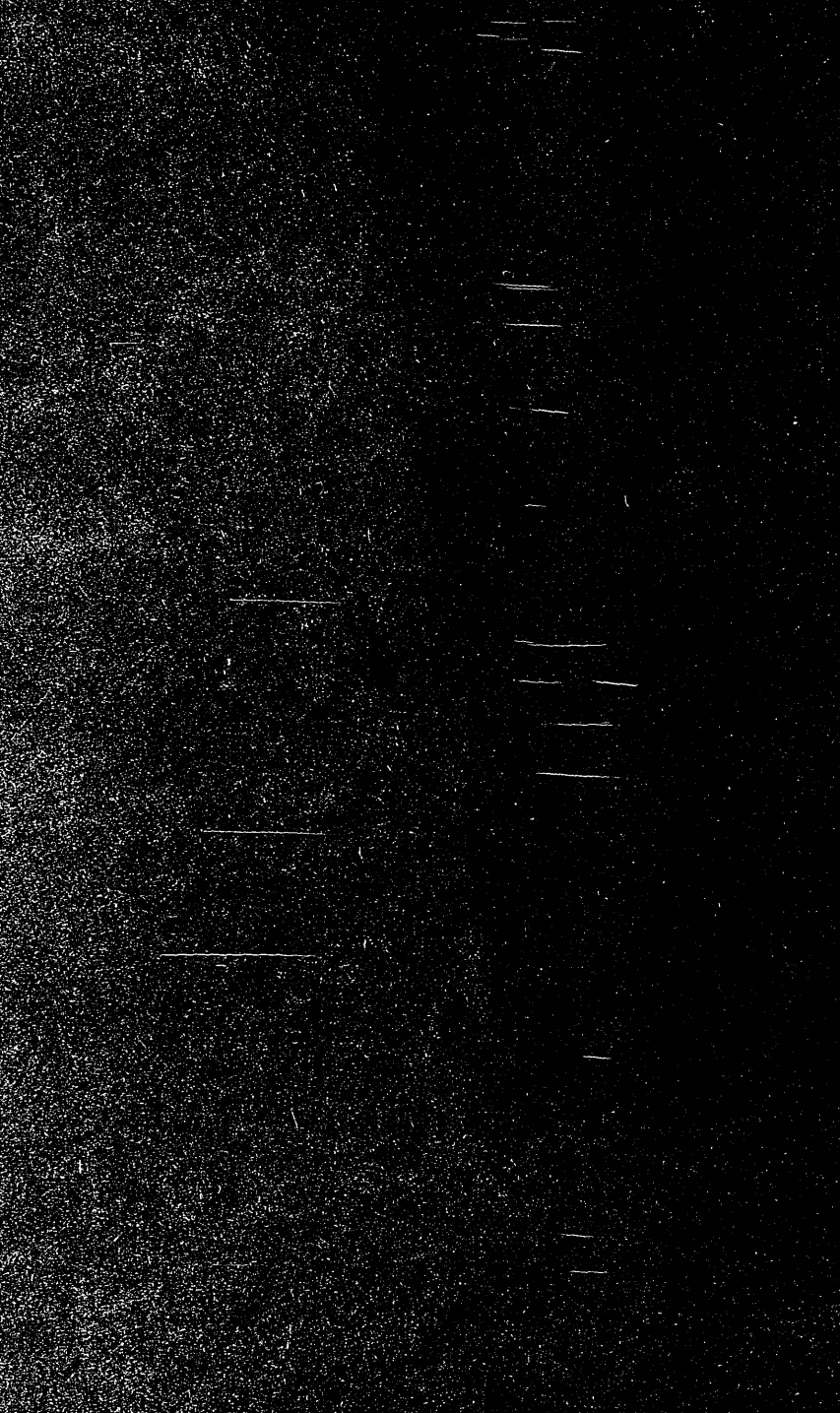






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BY

GEORGE HANMER LEYCESTER, A.M.
OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD;
AND BARRISTER AT LAW OF THE HONOURABLE
SOCIETY OF LINCOLN'S INN.

*Εἰρωνεία δὲ ἐστὶ λῆζειν τι προσποιούμενον μὴ λέγειν, ἢ ἐν τοῖς ἐναντίοις
ονομασι τὰ πράγματα προσαγορεύειν.*

ARIST. RHET.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

A GREAT many people will laugh at me, I suppose, for saying, that I think a man should be honest, cost him what it may. I shall take courage to inform my reader, however, that my bookseller, upon reading my Observations upon the Commandments, told me, to my no little regret, that I was not the first writer, who had treated them in this manner : adding, that Hildrop, an author whose name and writings I had never so much as heard of, had done the like before me. If there be any merit in my book, I should choose to have it without any deductions; and in order to it, I have given this notice; since it may be possible that some of my readers, if I should have the luck to meet with any, who, like myself, never have read or seen Hildrop's works, may give me the credit of being the first in a road, in which, I am very sorry to say, a better man than I am has been before me.

WHITE PLACE,

Feb. 18, 1795.

EXORDIUM.

IN consequence of the utmost intention of thought, and the deepest consideration, I discovered, that the Ten Commandments, which Moses brought down with him out of the burning mountain some time since, are not only of no sort of use, but a very great inconvenience to a Gentleman in pursuit of his pleasures. They appear to me to be just so many links of iron, cast upon the freedom of human actions; and, if I may be permitted to speak my sentiments, I think it is now high time they were filed off and thrown aside, in order that a man may have his limbs at full liberty. It is certainly a very wonderful thing that people should not have shaken off such a load of moral and religious lumber before this time, the rather, seeing that it is utterly impossible for a nation of any spirit to be at all at its ease, encumbered thus with a vast weight of Hebrew Ordi-

nances. I think I shall deserve great praise in doing all I can towards setting people free from a whimsical system of obligations, which have for some years made slaves of mankind. To speak the truth, had I not borne witness, with great grief of heart, to the strugglings, agonies, and convulsions of conscience, which have been observed to rend from time to time the intestines of such of my suffering fellow-creatures, who, having committed Theft, Adultery, Murder, or the like, have thereupon fallen into terror and vexation, because, forsooth, they had been forbidden by the Commandments of God so to do, upon pain of Everlasting Damnation; and had I not been thoroughly persuaded of the folly and vanity of such childish fears and apprehensions which wrought so much Scathe in their Souls, I should not have spoken one loud word. But deeming the thing, with great justice, to be a most inhuman Barbarity to withhold any consolation which it is in my power to bestow, the only means, indeed, of assuaging the scaldings of the conscience, and of laying all such horrible Devils which terror raises in the mind of man, lo! I forthwith cast about to attack the twentieth chapter of Exodus, receiving day after day proofs heaped upon proofs, of the very great nuisance of the Laws which it contains, and
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the many disturbances which they breed in society. Behold, therefore, courteous reader, a good salve for every sore of conscience in these my most salutary observations: behold the very foundation of every fear removed, the existence of God confuted, and all his Commandments, as it happens at a game at nine-pins, knocked down one upon another. But I would have thee remember, courteous Sir, that the very great hurry, in which I found myself to assist the distressed, is the cause of my not being so full in argument upon every point as I otherwise should have been; for, when a life is in extreme danger, the Doctor, upon the sudden, cannot carry his whole shop along with him, but fills his pockets with some of the best medicines, and runs to his patient as fast as he possibly can. Upon this consideration it is that I hope for excuse in the not having exhausted my whole stock of ratiocination upon the several heads of this my treatise: for be it known, that, had not a vast multitude of miserable sinners lingered with the utmost impatience for some comfort at my hands, I could have produced, at my leisure, a sufficient quantity of argumentation upon the absurdity of any one of the Commandments, to break the back of a dray-horse.

Observations on the first Commandment.

THOU SHALT HAVE NONE OTHER GODS BUT ME.

THIS is a very great hardship, to say no worse of it. — Now, in the first place, I should be glad to know by this Law, what will become of the Glutton, and the Drunkard, who make a God of the belly? of the Misers, who make Gods of their money-bags? of Gamesters, who worship the dice-box? of the Beaux, who go down upon their knees to no one thing else in the universe but the fine Ladies? I could name a great many other Deities: but lest I should offend any man by taking the name of his God in vain, let these which I have counted out suffice. I must confess, that this Commandment has something in it, which is enough to turn a man's head round upon his shoulders, — it implies, contrary to all sense and proof, the existence of a supreme Being. This fanciful notion, which has gained a great deal of credit in the world, to the no small consternation of weak and gloomy mortals,

mortals, who would fain partake of the comforts of this life, but dare as well eat their fingers as touch upon any luxury, for fear of being damned to all eternity—this fanciful notion, I say, must be totally destroyed, before people can enjoy themselves as they should do, or, indeed, live at all like rational creatures. So great a fool, I should think, cannot possibly exist upon the face of the earth, who believes in the being of any thing which he never saw, more especially if he has ever heard of that famous old saying, that “*Seeing is believing* ;” —or, to carry matters still further, in what he never felt, if he has ever heard of another Proverb, equally celebrated with the former, that “*Feeling is the Truth*.” To go yet deeper, for I will search this matter to the bottom, before I have done with it—can any man be so very mad as to believe that there exists, in the nature of things, any such place as London, unless he has seen the place with his own eyes? At this rate, my good reader, what would become of our common sense? If men so little in their wits are permitted to run about loose in the world, it may be deemed, and with great justice, a very hard thing, to keep folks any longer chained up in Bedlam. There are men, it is true, who go by the name of great scholars, who would

vain coax the most enlightened of the age into a creed, that such things really and truly do exist, which are not objects, nor can be so, of any of our senses : and indeed some of their arguments to this effect have gained so much ground as not to want men, who might otherwise pass for very wise and learned people, that admit them for truths. And in this are these great scholars very cunning men, and cannot by any means be said to argue in vain, forasmuch as they get a very comfortable subsistence for themselves and families by the propagation of these their sophistries. But it is now high time that the world be undeceived in these matters, as it cannot be denied that, in proportion as it casts off those restraints and obligations which Religion and Morality have thrown upon it, its progress will be swift towards liberty and perfection. And I must be permitted to say, that the world will never be free or perfect, as long as it tamely submits its nose into the hands of Philosophers, to be pulled this way, that way, and the other way, just as they think good. When the world was in its infant state, there certainly was at that time, I will allow, some necessity for a belief in God, and a strict attendance to laws both moral and religious: but since it is grown to its years of maturity, the

hour

hour is come for its childish fears, its Foolscap, and its Leading-strings, to be finally laid aside : and surely I cannot shew forth a better example for its imitation, than that of our modern fine Gentlemen, who, as soon as they arrive at the age of discretion, are ashamed to be thought to keep in mind any thing which they have been taught either at School or the University. Let me, therefore, entreat the world to think upon its age and dignity, and by no means disgrace its wisdom in listening, like a baby, to an old woman's story about the existence of a God, and the truth of the Bible. But, lest I should be thought rather to declaim, than refute, I will now proceed to examine some of the arguments by which the Philosophers undertake to prove that there is any such thing as a God.—And first, they lead us from the effect to the cause : Plato says, Παν δε αυ το γιγνομενον, υπ' αιτις τινος εξ αναγκης γιγνεσθαι· παντι γαρ αδυνατον χωρις αιτις γενεσιν σchein. Thus he holds forth in the beginning of his Timæus, with how much truth shall presently appear. Aristotle, in the eleventh book of his Metaphysics, asks the question, Πως γαρ κινηθησεται, (χρηματα scilicet) ε μηθεν εσαι ενεργεια αιτιον ; ε γαρ η γε υλη κινησει αυτη εαυτην αλλα τεκτονικη· εδε τα επιμηνια εδε η γη, αλλα τα σπερματα και η γονη. Διο ενιοι ποισιν

αἱ ενεργεῖαν. οἷον Λευκιππος καὶ Πλατων, αἱ γὰρ φασι εἶναι κίνησιν· ἀλλὰ διὰ τι καὶ τίνα εἰ λεγέσθιν. εἰδὲ ὧδ' εἰδὲ τὴν αἰτίαν· εἰδὲν γὰρ ὥς εὐτυχὲ κινεῖται, ἀλλὰ δεῖ τι αἱ ὑπάρχειν. Et paucis interjectis, sic ait, ἐστὶ τοίνυν τι καὶ ὃ κινεῖ. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ κινεῖμενον καὶ κινεῖν, μέσον τοίνυν ἐστὶ τι, ὃ εἰ κινεῖμενον κινεῖ, αἰδῶν, καὶ ἔσσια, καὶ ενεργεῖα ἔσα. Thomas Aquinas speaks boldly, Remota autem causa, removetur effectus: ergo si non fuerit primum in causis efficientibus, nec erit ultimum, nec medium. Sed si procedatur in infinitum in causis efficientibus, non erit prima causa efficiens: et sic non erit nec effectus ultimus, nec causæ efficientes mediæ, quod *patet esse falsum*. Ergo est necesse ponere aliquam causam efficientem primam, quam omnes Deum nominant. Primæ Par. Art. iii. Grotius de Veritate Christ. Rel. appears to be of the same opinion. A very old book, called the Bible, now little known, says, very plainly, **בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ; ותארע היתה תהו ובהו;** But this is an assertion without any proof, and cannot therefore be admitted in argument. And it is a very fit question in this place, whether God's word ought to go for any thing to prove his own existence? But, before I go any further, it should be observed, in the midst of all this learning, that no man can argue well without talking in Hebrew, Greek,

Greek, and Latin, although it be nothing at all to the purpose; because he never will convince the dunces, unless he reasons in languages which they do not understand; for then, let him say what he will, quicquid in Buccam venerit, they will pronounce, with great solidity, that his arguments are very good, in order that they may be thought to understand him. But *αφεις την υπεραν, τον ποδα διωκω*: this *απροσδιονυσως* has nothing to do with Bacchus. To return to * Plato and Aristotle: if the cause of the cause be the cause of the thing caused, and the thing caused of the cause of the cause be the effect of the cause of the cause, the cause of the cause may be given without any effect being caused. For example, Medicine may be given as the cause of Health, the Physician who mixes up the medicine as the cause of its cause; therefore the Physician is the cause of the cause of the thing caused: but it is given that health is not universaliter caused either of the cause, or of the cause of the cause; therefore the cause of the cause

* Men who dispute the Being of a God, always talk a great deal without saying any thing to the purpose, and take a world of pains to prove and refute those things the most, which have the least to do with the subject: the perfection of their art lies in making vastly plain and good, such principles which no man in his wits will deny them, in order to get any thing else they propose to be taken for granted, without any proofs at all.

may be given without being the cause of the cause of the thing caused. Thus it is manifest that causes, and the causes of causes, may exist, without being the causes, or the causes of causes of any effects at all. Moreover the effect may be given to exist without the cause, or the cause of the cause; forasmuch as health often exists without having any thing at all to do with the cause of the cause, or the cause of the thing caused: therefore the effect may be given without the cause, or the cause of the cause of the thing caused: therefore the argument *a priori*, from the cause to the effect, and the argument *a posteriori*, from the effect to the cause, are proved to be *Elenchi*. Thus having shaken one of their magnificent arguments into dust, not without great hazard of burying myself, like Samson, in the ruins; I shall next consider, whether the essence of a physical essence implies the essence of an actual essence: I proceed universaliter upon the negation of the implication; and affirm that the connexion, If there be a star in existence, the pre-existence and co-existence of an actual existence is proved, is not good, because, if it be true that that which is, is, there can be no need of any *Necessarium quid*, to make it that which it already is: for, if A is B, and c is B, c is already

ready

ready A, without any need of D. But it may be objected, that if a star be already a star, and it be admitted, that, as it is a star, it needs no help ab extra to exist a star, yet it cannot be collected that it did not need some help to make it a star: I answer, neither can it be affirmed that there ever was a time when it was not a star. But Aristotle says in his *Metaphysics*, that whatsoever is compounded may be dissolved: but all things subject to solution are not eternal: therefore there was a time when a star was not. And if we admit his principles, this fellow will play the devil with us. If there was a time when a star was not, there must a time be given when a star was made: but nothing can make itself without existing before itself, which is an absurdity: therefore something must be given to have existed before a star began to exist, to make it what it is, or else it had never been; which something is God. This looks like a very fine argument, and I suppose the inventor of it thought it proved a great deal: and although arguments, such as this is, are very easily answered by making them no answer at all, as wise old Gentlemen receive the reasonings of young folks with silence, in order to shew them, that they have said nothing worth notice; however, I shall proceed against it with an horned syllogism

fylogifm in this manner : all arguments are raifed to fortify fome weaknefs in the fubject : but truth cannot be faid to be a thing in which there is any weaknefs : therefore the ftronger the argument is built to defend any thing, fuch thing is falfe in proportion to the force and ftrength of the argument which is made to defend it. Thefe then are the horns of the dilemma ; either the argument I am oppofing is a good one, or a bad one : if it be ftrong and good, it implies weaknefs in that which it defends ; which cannot be truth, fince truth is not to be fhaken : if it be a bad one, a bad argument proves nothing at all but its own abfurdity.

But to proceed. Surely it is now high time for men of courage and fpirit to burft all religious bonds afunder, and that the whims and dreams of Theology and Metaphyficks were laughed at by all who lay any the leaft claim to modern refinement. I would advife mankind to ftrike a bold ftroke, to believe in nothing but what fuits its own convenience. A man can never be happy as long as he thinks another wifer than himfelf ; therefore let me admonifh every one who fhould happen to be puzzled at any odd thing in nature, by no means to go to any great Scholar to get it explained, but pafs it over without troubling his head at all about the matter ; always tak-
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ing it for granted, that, if he does not know how to account for it, it is impossible any one else should. If a man be the greatest fool on the face of the earth, he will be sure to give the wisest Philosopher his due, if, without consulting him upon any emergency, he does him the honour to think him only as clever a fellow as himself. Moreover, it is by no means suitable to the character of a man of spirit to own himself ignorant in any thing; but rather to remain so, than to stain his reputation in begging for a little knowledge. Indeed, I think fit to say, that it is very dangerous for a man to be too curious in his inquiries into the truth of the existence of God; it may so far disqualify him for a man of fashion and pleasure, as to spoil the enjoyment of the better part of his life. The mischief of the thing lies in this; if a man once gives himself up to thinking, he is a lost creature to himself, his friends, and the world; he takes it into his brains that he is continually finding out some strange thing or other: the growing of the grass fixes him in amazement; he cannot eat an apple without admiring the wonderful contexture of its parts; and the formation of an animal makes his hair stand on end upon his head. I have known a man of this turn of mind fix his eyes upon a cabbage with as much astonish-

astonishment as if he had seen the apparition of his grandmother ; and reckon up the number of veins in one of the leaves of it, with as much exactness as another man would count his guineas in change for a bank-note. I look upon a man of this sort to be upon his parole of lunacy, and, as long as he does no mischief, is permitted to run about the garden, like a tame gull, and divert himself with picking up snail-shells, and catching of butterflies. I have often conceived Physiology to be little else than a lure held out by ingenious men to entice the unwary into a belief of a Divinity, merely for the purpose of making them pay to be taught how to worship him. And, indeed, when we take a view of the universe, and behold all things about us governed by the wisest system of Laws, and discover the mass, which at first sight appears to be a mixture of disturbance, and a quarrel of elements, upon a nicer examination to be full of beauty, order and magnificence: when we look into the properties of things, and observe bodies of different qualities, not only not flying from all association with each other, but even joining in such communion as to constitute the choicest complexions of Nature ; and that the very principle whose chief attribute it is to divide and to disunite

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and fet things at a diftance from one another, I mean a repugnancy of parts, producing agreement and harmony in the whole: and, as difputes in the moral world bring folks together, though it be by the ears, and caufe them to agree in one point, the knocking each other on the head, and clofe the ranks of warring individuals making a uniform whole, a perfect battle: thus when we behold in the natural world conflicting principles engaged in perpetual combat, and the powers allotted to each upon fuch equal balance as none of them can, for any great fpace of time, maintain the maftery over their opponents, fometimes the one getting the better, and fometimes the other, and their mutual ftruggles and bickerings yielding an effect as different from its caufe as order differs from confufion, producing a perfect fyftem: when we fearch into the rubbifh of the earth, and difcover the feeds of plants and the eggs of living creatures deposited in the midft of it; and behold the dirt and refuse in which they lie concealed, furnifhing them not only with protection from injuries in fuch their ftate of infirmity, but alfo with food and nourifhment at the time appointed for their change: when we look up at the ftars, and examine into the wonderful regularity of their movements,

take

take notice of the Tropicks, the Solstices, the risings and settings of the Sun, behold the Comets guided by some great Power through the vast depths of the unbounded space which furrounds us, without interfering with the numberless bodies which roll on every side of them by any extravagant deviations—I must confess that we are in very great danger of believing in the existence of an Almighty. Add to this, when the Philosophers tell us that the world cannot exist, any more than can a temple without the pre-existence of some Architect; that no motion can exist without the co-existence of some Mover, *ordinem non dari nisi cum relatione ad aliquid primum*, I own, that, unless we are very steady men, we shall be in no small danger of admitting what they say to be truths. But we must first of all learn to shut our eyes against the light of Philosophy, if it be our intention to mount aloft above the ridiculous fancies of the Vulgar.

Observations upon the Second Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THYSELF ANY GRA-
VEN IMAGE, &c.

THIS is a very fine piece of Antiquity, as indeed are all the other Commandments, and more especially so as they appear in the old Hebrew character: as curiosities surely they are intitled to some portion of respect, and should take their place accordingly, among other rarities, in the cabinet of the Virtuoso. But to prescribe them to the world as the rules of its conduct, when it is so very evident that they contain such principles as are sworn foes to its most exquisite gratifications, is certainly a very great absurdity. It is not to be denied, perhaps, that they suited extremely well with the manners of Moses and his multitude in the wilderness: but it is to be considered, that the world, since those times, has made vast progress, and taken prodigious strides towards elegance and perfection: so much so that no man, of good sense, will deem the thing by any means fit and proper, that the same rules which were calculated for those rude and barbarous ages, should be proposed as suitable

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directions

directions for a modern fine Gentleman. Surely any person, who has wit enough to foresee that he never can get astride upon his horse, if he keeps both his legs on one side of the saddle, must be well aware of the absurdity of thinking, that people of fashion now-a-days are not much better judges of what they ought to do than God can be for them. And it would be a very strange thing, if they did any other than what is right, since they have so able an instructor as the Devil himself to advise them. The Commandment now under consideration may be looked upon as the least injurious of any in the Decalogue, since the force of it is directed against a comical old custom, which cannot be said to be much the rage with us at present—I mean Idolatry. Indeed, upon re-considering the Commandment, I have my suspicions that the Ladies are a little concerned in it, since it goes on to say, “Thou shalt not bow down to them or worship them.” I know this is spoken with respect to the Idols in general: but when I reflect upon the nauseous finery of the Idols dresses, the profusion of diamonds which they wear, the very disgusting manner in which their faces are painted, the prayers, adorations, bows, and fine speeches offered at their feet, I must own that I cannot discover any other difference

difference between an Idol and a modern fine Lady, except indeed that the one is composed of flesh and blood, the other of wood and stone. If this be really the state of the case, and there appear to be very good grounds for the conjecture, this Commandment, like the rest, may be attended with very serious and alarming consequences; and I do hereby enter my caveat against it, lest the Beaux, who bow down and worship the fine Ladies, should pay any the smallest regard to this Law against Idolatry.

Observations upon the Third Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THY GOD
IN VAIN, &c.

THOU shalt not take God's name in vain !
What, not if we can get any thing by it ?
Possession of a good estate by perjury, for
instance ? A man would be a fool indeed, if
he cared at all what use he put God's name
to, if it might be the means of putting any
thing into his pocket. But I have my
doubts whether that would be a breach of
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the Law: for how can any one, who gets any thing by it, be said to take the Lord's name in vain? I would by no means be thought to abuse the Commandment for what is not intended in it: and although I have my doubts of this being the genuine sense of the statute, yet it is sometimes a handsome thing, whatever logicians may say, to take for granted what remains to be proved. If it is a sin however to make so good a use of the Lord's name, it is a sin that has so much utility and spirit in it, that I would earnestly recommend it to the practice of mankind: and as for that foolish notion of being damned after death, I would meet it by saying, that damnation cannot have much weight with any man who does not believe that he shall ever live to see it. Having mentioned the word damnation, I will beg for the reader's excuse, to make an observation or two upon it. Damnation, or, in other words, the being burned for one's sins in a great fire to eternity, would be excessively inconvenient, were there any truth in it: but the notion of Hell-fire is grown too old now to pass, in these enlightened times, with any sort of credit: so much so, that most people take a great deal more pains to guard themselves against fires in their houses at night, than to save their

their

their souls from this fire after death, by doing what God bids them: wisely deeming it great loss of time to prepare themselves against what *may* happen, without being sure that it *will* happen. But to return to the Commandment: the use of the tongue seems to be a good deal concerned in it; and were it to be strictly observed as a rule in conversation, I am at a loss to conceive in what manner one Gentleman could speak five words to another, without a very great impediment in his speech. But with respect to the observance of this law, I will say, to give people their due, that I do not think a great deal needs be added upon it, in order to persuade men to break it; for, to the honour of our age be it said, I very seldom meet with a man of any class, who makes the use of God's name any matter of conscience, whether it be introduced as an ornament of speech only, or, with the ceremony of kissing the Bible, as the means of making some addition to his fortune. But, as I said just now, this may not be judged to come within the statute; and when there is any thing gotten by it, God's name cannot properly be said to be taken in vain.

Observations upon the Fourth Commandment.

REMEMBER THOU KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH
DAY, &c.

ANY one who reads this Commandment might think, that people really had nothing else to do on a Sunday, but to go to church, and say their prayers. — Horribly gothic as this custom may appear, yet there are, I am ashamed to say, a few folks of very good distinction, who still make a practice of going to church, with their wives and families, almost every Sunday. Far be it from me to deal in the usual cant of writers, who declaim against the degeneracy of the times—I should be guilty of much scandal, and of very great injustice to the age in which I have the honour to live, to say, that a very considerable majority, composed, I must add, of a number of persons of the first figure, did not set the world the best of examples, in not only not going to church themselves, but with a very laudable zeal making a jest of those that do. And I will allow that a man must needs be the occasion of not a little merriment, should he be discovered upon his knees on
a mat,

a mat, in the middle of a great cathedral, begging God's pardon for his sins:—or, which may appear still more absurd, returning him thanks for a plentiful season, when every body knows that his thanks are rather due to the Farmers for taking good care of the land. But as religion falls more particularly under my observation in this Commandment, it will not be amiss to give some account of it, and what uses (for it certainly has its uses) it ought to be put to. If we look into the political histories of the world, and view mankind modified into a variety of civil constitutions, we shall find, upon an examination into each of them, that religion is always seen to have a place in the structure of every system. The image of some Deity was not only looked upon by our wise forefathers to be a very pretty ornament in their public edifices, but also to be of very great use to keep the multitude in awe, to the end that such stubborn stuff might become more pliable, by the means of spiritual fear, to the purposes of civil discipline. And we find, accordingly, that as soon as the rabble were taught, with great art, to believe in the Divinities of the land, and began to tremble at the thought of the wrath of Heaven, the ground-work of government was made

good, the laws were armed with double terrours, and the people did what their masters bade them. So far religion is of great use : and upon this account it is, that we find Gods, one or more, in every nation under the sun, adorned with different titles and ceremonies, as best suit with the plan of the constitution. Moses, a very able politician, soon found it to be impracticable to attempt the management of such a multitude as he had upon his hands, without having recourse to a Deity :

Nec Deus interfit nisi dignus vindice nodus. HOR.

And even when the Israelites were convinced of the being of a God by a sensible exhibition of his glories upon mount Sinai, as the Bible tells us, they made bold to fabricate a God to their better liking, and fell down and worshipped a Calf, in the midst of the roarings of the thunder of the Most High ; exceeding in this, perhaps, any thing an Atheist of the present times would dare to do, who is so great a fool as to fall into a fit of the vapours upon the sudden bursting of a modern thunder-cloud. But to return from this journey into the antiquities of the East, whence arose the religion which we are bold to call the only true one—it will be very much to my purpose to shew, upon what sort of authority this religion is built,
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and by these means we shall see whether, upon the exposure of the frame of it to the air, like bodies preserved in leaden coffins, it will not fall into dust and ashes. But it may be asked, whether I do not think that I deserve to be hanged, for taking so much pains to extinguish religion, at the same time that I confess, that, if none other, it has its political uses? I answer, that we are too good to stand in need of any religion: we, "*were all laws abolished, should live the same lives*" Religion can be of no use to us, a refined race of men, who not only see at a glance what is right, but immediately practise it. We stand in need of no compulsion, we ought to be free to choose which we will serve, God or the Devil: and if folks like the Devil best, upon account of the sweet-meats he strews in their way, I make no doubt but that they will meet with a just reward for so doing. If I may be permitted to speak my mind, I think it is high time that every one were set at his liberty to do just as he pleases; and I dare say no man would do any thing, without being able to give a special good reason for it. I am much grieved in my heart, to see so many fine young fellows yearly nipped in the bud at the gallows, and humbly think that the laws should not interfere

interfere in such trifling matters as the breaking into houses, cutting people's throats, committing of rapes, sacrilege, and other the like innocent amusements. But I shall not speak against our religion, without looking into its principles; and the reader of these my observations shall be satisfied, that I do not blame it without very good reasons. That which we profess is called, if my memory does not fail me, the Christian religion; and it certainly abounds with instructions, but none, as I can find, of any sort of use to us at the present day. Christ, who built it upon the foundation which he found cast to his hand in the Old Testament, was a person, it must be confessed, of some celebrity seventeen hundred years ago; but now seems to be of little use else but to give a date to the almanack. I have examined the scheme of Christian disciplines with very great attention, as we have it in the original tongue, and this, for fear I might do it any wrong by reading it, as it were, at second hand, in the translations; and I must declare, that I have found it extremely deficient in many points, and those of the very last consequence. I must beg the reader to take particular notice of what I am going to say: I will take my oath of it, if need be, that a man may read the whole
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of the New Testament, so is the book called which contains the Christian institutes, from one end to the other, without being instructed in one single rule for the advancement of any of the fine arts, the commencing a master in which it is that constitutes the Man of Fashion. So different from this is the truth, that I dare say the reader will be astonished, when I tell him, that drinking, gaming, fornication, adultery, murder, blasphemy, slander, and every other noble art, are absolutely abused, threatned and condemned in almost every leaf of the book. Let me not be misunderstood to qualify this my sentence on the New Testament by the word *almost*, as if I would say that here and there a leaf is extant therein, which seems to favour the fine arts which I have just named: by no means—I will take my oath of it, I repeat it, that they are universally condemned by the spirit of the book, throughout. Hence it is evident enough, that no man who has the honour to deserve to be hanged, or to be suffocated in a horse-pond, as a nuisance to society, stands clear of the bitter scourge of the holy Canons. Thus much for the Christian doctrines, which give scoundrels and profligates no quarter, but stretch forth a rod that festers in their flesh, and whet and exasperate their conscience

consciencés against them. I must beg leave to observe however, before I quit this subject, that it is to act the part of one out of his right wits, rather than of a good critic, to bestow unqualified praise or censure upon any composition; and I will say, if it be upon no other account than to gain better credit for being just in my censures, and to raise the price of my praise, that this volume, as a code of moral laws, is extremely complete, correct, and consistent in all its parts; and, further let me add, that it certainly gives a man fair play to the very last; tells him, that there is always a pardon ready for him at any time, when he pleases to put himself in a fit posture to ask for it. To speak the truth, the plain, honest, hearty welcome that the legislator gives to those who tell him that they are sorry they have offended him, I cannot but say, put me in a very good humour when I read it. But the rules of moral conduct themselves, some of the principal of which will fall under my observations in the remaining pages of this discourse, are surely so very contradictory to the present modes and fashions, inasmuch as it is not to be expected that people of free spirit and good breeding will give up the pleasures and comforts of life for their sake.

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If Christ had come forward, indeed, as a useful instructor in such things as are really worth the notice of the polite world, and put fine folks in a better method of plundering young men of their patrimony than hazard, faro, or eo; enriched the science of intriguing with some new plots and machinations, by which men of fashion might with greater security debauch beautiful women, without recurring still to the old trick of making friendships with their fathers, brothers, or husbands; taken the turf into consideration, and given his Apostles some useful hints concerning jockeyship, betting, and the management of race-horses; left us some good rules for duelling, improved the art of cookery, and given us in the New Testament some excellent receipts for making and ripening all sorts of wines; obliged his disciples with the discovery of some noble elixir to restore lost health, and repair constitutions shattered by sensual indulgences: in a word, had he extended and cultivated the province of debauchery in all its parts, instead of haranguing the multitude upon religion and morality, then, indeed, Christ had made his appearance on earth to some purpose: but as matters are at present, I confess, I cannot see what use he has been of to the better
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fort of people, who seem to think him and his apostles far beneath their notice. If they thought there was any truth in his being the Son of God, his high extraction, one might conceive, would entitle him to their civilities; since the greatest scoundrel on the earth, provided that he is come of a good family, is looked upon as a person of distinguished merit, and treated accordingly with much respect: this I suppose may be the reason, and a man rises into notice as he advances in rascality, and is not deemed fit to be spoken to by any body, until he has committed crimes enough to have sent a vulgar rogue to the antipodes.

There is a degree of cowardice in keeping holy the Sabbath-day, because the fear of God is implied in it: which is a full sufficient reason for men of fashion to shun a church with as much indignation as they would the refusal of a challenge. No man, surely, who calls himself a Gentleman, would by any means appear to be afraid of God, or hell; wisely judging true courage to consist in the being afraid of nothing. Choice spirits, who kick the world before them like a football, laugh at the idea of being damned. This is very true, it may be said, as long as they are in good health, they do not think of death, or care for its consequences: but
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when their debaucheries have cast them upon a bed of sickness, and the physicians are met in consultation upon their rotten constitutions, they fall into a terrible fright, and get a clergyman to say some prayers for them. I was afraid of this objection, and, I must confess, I scarcely know what to answer to it. I own I have been a witness to instances of this sort, and have known one of the finest dogs of the age laugh at God when he was well, and beg his pardon when he was sick; nay, more than that, lie shivering and quaking on his bed, and ask the clergyman, whether he thought he should be damned or not. This was the case of my Lord Rochester, who shewed himself off, when in good health, for the choicest spirit of his time, and would have died like an hero, and gone to the devil, or elsewhere, it had been no great matter, if he had not run sneaking after the parson at his last moments. The same may be said of a great many fine fellows, who have lost their hearts at the hour of death, and, instead of dying game, have gone whining out of the world, like a litter of puppies to the horse-pond.

There is much inconvenience in keeping holy the Sabbath-day: if the custom of going to church were tolerable at any time, it would be so in the summer months, when
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the church is the coolest place to be found: this circumstance might be reckoned upon as some amends for being pulled out of bed before one's time to attend prayers. But in winter to be called up as soon as the sun rises, to hurry away to church half dressed, half awake, and without one's breakfast, to suffer martyrdom by cold in the midst of stone walls, and marble monuments, is surely more than what God ought to expect at the hands of any Gentleman or Lady in the universe. And I think I may safely say, that there are very few people of any note, who would not sooner run the risk of being damned, than submit to such extravagant a Commandment.

The keeping holy the Sabbath-day is vastly vulgar, forasmuch as the beau monde deem the thing excessively ungentleel to ask any favours of God Almighty. And, indeed, for people who have every thing they want within their reach, either to pray to God for more, or thank him for what they have got, would be very ridiculous. Moreover, folks go to church to beg God's pardon for their sins: therefore to be continually going to church, is as much as to say, one is a very great sinner. Besides, the clergyman is kept and paid on purpose to take care of our souls: if this be the truth, what need have

we to trouble ourselves at all about the matter? It is his business, not ours, to take care that no soul in his parish be damned.

Observations upon the Fifth Commandment.

HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER, &c.

TWO things are implied in this Commandment, with respect to the duties of children to their parents; that is to say, gratitude and respect. Gratitude is due to them for our introduction into the world, and for the kindnesses which we receive, after we are landed in it. Respect, first to their age and authority, secondly, to their persons and commands. I shall now proceed to point out the very great absurdities of these duties. In the first place, I cannot see what great thanks are due from the child to its parents, for awakening him out of the peaceful slumbers of non-existence, and thrusting him, whether he will or no, into a world full of scoundrels and misery, to be kicked and cuffed, and horse-whipped, and perhaps hang-
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ed at last ; and all for no other reason, but because his parents chose to follow their own inclinations. I say, I cannot see where the mighty obligation lies in this matter, and, indeed, why the child should not owe the parents a spite, rather than good offices, for introducing him into so much bad company. Not to mention the cloathing him with a body at the best subject to pains, and infirmities ; but, for the most part, loaded with a super-cargo of the parents diseases. If, indeed, there were any such thing as a life after this, not only free from all pain, but a state of eternal happiness, something might be reckoned upon, as a compensation for the variety of ill turns, and knocks on the pate, which a man meets with in this world : this, indeed, would be an excellent poultice for all the thorns in the flesh. But for a man to be pulled by the nose, and kicked upon the back-side, dashed about from post to pillar, and back again from pillar to post, and very often to fall in with a sound cudgelling for nothing at all, and finally to go out of the world, like a strange dog out of a kitchen, with oaths, execrations, and a red-hot poker at his head, is a sort of frolic, in which I confess I cannot see any vast deal of fun, or favour ; or, how it is, that a man is bound in gratitude to his father and mother, for all this

rare sport*. But to give the Commandment fair play, I will admit, that a man's life is not altogether made up of hard rubs, and broken shins; I will allow, that out of this comical haricot, a favoury bit may here and there be fished by the wife, and the judicious—let it be so:—nevertheless the bitter is an overmatch for the sweet; there are so many cross bones in this odd fish, that it is ten to one a man gets choaked with them, before he has got half a belly full. And what are the sweets of this life, after all that is said of them, but very windy food at the best, and although they may tickle the palate a little at the moment, very generally end in a fit of the colic†? But let us fol-

* I think fit to observe on this place, that this is intended as a satire on those, who are at all times very ready to set down to the account of their fathers and mothers, those evils, which, in fact, they have nobody to thank for but themselves: since, it should be remembered, that every one has sufficient reason given him to keep his passions in very good order if he will, which are the genuine causes of most of the troubles which men fall into: but those calamities, which assault us, arising either from the perverseness of others, or appointed by the will of God, are of such value to the true Christian, as, without them, he cannot shew how much he is superiour to the rest of mankind.

† Sensual indulgences, for the most part, carry so bitter a scourge along with them, that the profligate gets little else than an aching heart for his money. And there is a good deal of arch satire in the phrase, the calling these sensualists, “*Men of Pleasure*.” If any doubt this, let them ask the Physicians, who will tell them, that the acutest pains, and the most excruciating agonies, are the fruits of excess, intemperance, and debauchery. But it may be thought a little too hard, to make

low a fashionable brat from his birth to his grave, and, by these means, we shall be the better enabled to see what mighty obligations he is under to his father and mother.

The very moment, almost, that he is landed in the world, the poor animal is rolled up in a good measure of fine linen, bound hand and foot, and thrown into a sort of wicker-basket, to bawl itself to sleep. As for the mother, she makes all the haste she can to recover her strength and beauty, and get out again among her gallants. To return to the babe—a sort of a milch cow is provided for its sustenance; and it has very good luck if it meets with some fresh country wench, sent up to London to get her own living, with a fine breast of milk, and a bastard at her back, that is hurried out of the world as soon as it comes into it, with a fit of the gripes, by eating sour butter-milk, deprived of its natural right to its mother's breasts to make room for a brat of better conditions than itself. A fine lady, it must be observed, has

a jest of human miseries; I have to say, that when parents have taken a great deal of trouble to instruct their children in Religion and Morality, and have shewn their offspring, with much care and good will, the road which leads through piety and virtue to happiness in this world, and in the next, and are treated with disobedience, scorn, and contumacy for their pains; no scourge is too sharp for the flesh of those reprobates, who make a mockery of the sorrows of their fathers and mothers, and use old age irreverently.

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something else to do than to nurse her own child, and thinks she has had quite trouble enough with it before it was brought forth, and therefore never plagues herself with the vermin afterwards. As for the fine Gentleman whom the newspapers call the father, he reads an account of his Lady's having been in the straw in the Daily Advertiser, deeming the thing to be at the best but an even bett whether the child be his own or another's. To proceed—our young varlet has a pair of breeches put upon his tail, and is forthwith packed off to a public school. Here a new scene of misery is opened upon our small hero, and he is followed close at the heels with a scourge out of one class into another, until such time as he is old enough to go to the University: the very moment he is out of the reach of the rod, he leaps, and jumps, and laughs, and capers, and dances, like a mad thing. He is no sooner entered at the University, but he has the use of his limbs taken from him; he is forced to sit still, as if he had the gout, for many hours together, listening to a variety of tedious lectures; an insult which no man of any spirit can bear: he leaves college as soon as he can:—Now gaming, drinking and riot, horses, dogs, and harlots, would send him, very genteelly, to the Devil

in a twelvemonth, did not his father catch him up, and tie a great log to his heels—I mean a private Tutor—and send him abroad upon his travels. Lo ! He returns to his native country, after having travelled like a great fish, that always stinks the worse, the farther it is carried ; and, as rivers which run through a great many towns, collect a nasty load of foil and filth at each, in their Tour ; our fine Gentleman convinces us, by the additional vices, and diseases, which he has gathered as he ran along, that he has laid out his father's money to the very best advantage. Now, immediately upon the importation of our hero, and his freight of follies, his father orders him to marry without delay.—His foreign air, his fine clothes, and his impudence, introduce him, at once, as the first favourite among the Ladies ; and all those charms, and beauties, which some folks are apt to think should be the reward of men of real worth, are displayed to attract our irresistible fine Gentleman. One pretty Miss makes him a purse, another a pocket-book, another a tooth-pick-case, another a watch-chain, and another strikes a bold stroke for our beau ; and writes him a note with her own hand. Our grand Seignior is not much at a loss, at which to cast his handkerchief, and, different perhaps from other races,

races, she wins this, who carries the greatest weight of metal. A licence is immediately procured, and some poor girl is made supremely blessed, in being united to a mass of putrefaction. Old age comes on at thirty, his diseases thicken upon him, and draw up their complicated forces upon his shattered constitution. The Physicians meet, consult, and give him up to his maladies, and his chaplain; who discovers as great a complication of disorders in his soul, as had baffled the arts of the faculty in his body: at length comes old Death, and carries off our choice spirit in a terrible fright, and in dismal expectation of everlasting damnation. Now this is a fashionable journey through life; reader, what thinkest thou of it? I think a man had better be horse-whipt from his cradle to his grave, than run such a race as I have described; and would owe more thanks to his father and mother.

It may be objected here, that people ought to take better care of their children. — OUGHT!!!—A man might as well tell me, that people *ought* to keep God's Commandments.—*Ought!* indeed: a fine word, that *ought*. — But thus much for gratitude. — Now for respect. — In the first place, a question occurs here: is respect due from children to their parents, abstractedly, be-
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cause they are their parents, or rather, upon account that they carry themselves with such becoming dignity in all they do and say, as to shew themselves really respectable? because, if parents act the part of either fools, or profligates, it would be little else than a practical satire upon their fathers and mothers, for children to shew them a respect which folly, though covered with grey hairs, can have no title to. It would look well, I must confess, for parents to correct their children for doing the very same things, which, if they themselves have left off doing, it is not because they are no longer willing, but no longer able to do. But if parents make a practice of breaking as many of God's Commandments as they can, and break their children's heads for following their parents example, how should the children have a respect for their parents, when their fathers and mothers do those very things, for the doing of which the children are beaten? Let it be noted here, that I do not say parents do wrong in breaking God's Commandments; I would by all means in the world advise them so to do, if they lie in their way either to pleasure, or profit; and I think hanging is a very hard thing, and a very great inconvenience to any man, merely because he will have a thing one way, and the law will

will have it another. — Let me be understood to say, that children should not be corrected for doing what their parents do ; if they are, I cannot see what respect is due to people, who commend a thing by practising it, and, like folks out of their wits, condemn it, in rebuking their children for doing it ; for, surely, they cannot beat a child for doing right : and, surely, they themselves would not do any thing, if it were wrong. Add to this, respect to parents is a very great hardship, and a sound box on the ear, is no other than what an old lady ought to expect, if she take so much upon her, as to tell her daughter of her faults. — And it is quite enough, I think, if a young fellow of fashion and spirit bear, with some show of good humour, the being kept out of his estates, by his father, without having the additional duty of putting up with reproofs, and ill words, laid upon him. What can be a greater hardship upon a son, than to have his father lingering in this world, to the amount of seventy or eighty years ; as if he staid in the land of the living, upon no other account than to guard his money, and tie up his heir apparent from profligacy, madness, and riot ? Can his son honour and revere his father for this ? At the time too, when he is looking out with
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such eager wishes for the day, which will put it into his power to turn the good old family mansion into a theatre, gaming-house, or a bagnio? Can he respect the man, who stands between him and his dearest pleasures? Can he do otherwise than hope soon to see his parent's bones mingled with the dust, when his throat burns for the midnight bumper, and his heart pants for the high excesses of debauchery?—But enough of this Commandment.

Observations upon the Sixth Commandment.

THOU SHALT DO NO MURDER.

THIS is one of the severest laws that ever existed: and I have not the least doubt, but my reader will agree with me in its being so, as soon as I produce him my reasons upon it. If we follow the footsteps of those who are gone before us, we shall not make any very long stay in this world; and time runs on so fast, that the best part of a man's

man's life is spent, before he thinks at all about being rivetted into a stone coffin, and having two or three tuns of marble laid upon his bones. Death, indeed, is a sort of thing, which people think very little about, as long as they live at their ease, and their tradesmen will give them credit; and always put off the payment of this great debt of nature, as they do of their other debts, as long as they can. And this, as long as folks enjoy themselves, and have a sufficient stock of constitution to answer the demands of their passions and appetites, and plenty of money in their purses, nobody, surely, can blame them for doing. But although people in general do not much like to have any thing to do with death, as long as they can possibly avoid it, upon the account of an odd sort of uncertainty that seems to attend this going out of the world, with respect to what will become of them when their souls and bodies dissolve partnership; yet death has its uses, and those too very good ones, when a man is hunted about in the world like a duck in a mill-pool, by a pack of barking dogs that will not be satisfied until they have torn his estates all to pieces, in order to get at their own, as they politely term it, and shut him up in a dungeon to be haunted by the ghosts of his departed guineas. A man begins to
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think that there is no great fun in prolonging his existence when he has lost all honour and credit in the world; when he has been led out of the gaming-houses for a sharper by the nose, and has been introduced to the kennel by some handsome kicks upon the backside; when he has a mark set upon him, like Cain, for a scoundrel, and has a back that attracts the horse-whip like a magnet; when he cannot move from one place to another without being steered, like a ship, at the helm, with a supple-jack, or taken in tow by his ears to the horse-pond; when all his friends stand aloof from him, as if he had got the plague, and wheel off their nostrils at the sight of him, as they do from a night-cart; when he is reduced to his last shirt and shilling, and all men run away from him, like rats from a falling house; when hunger pinches his belly and cold his back; when no man will trust him for a penny-worth of bread—I say, when such a quiver of calamities is exhausted upon a miserable sinner, the law is unspeakably severe that forbids him to put an end to his sufferings. According to this Commandment a man cannot call his soul his own, since he is not at liberty to do what he likes with it, but is bound by its rigour to support, of all others the greatest curse, a wretched existence.

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It may be said, perhaps, that it is no great matter what becomes of a rascal, and the heavier the pains and penalties that are laid upon him the better. I dare say there are folks in the world, who are good-natured enough to think so, and such as may never have the luck to meet with as much rope as they deserve, as long as they live. Let it be noted, however, that I am not speaking of what others think in this case, but what the poor devil thinks of his ill fortune, who is buffeted about in such a manner above ground, that he would fain get under it, like a hard-run fox, as soon as he can.

The taking of a thing for granted to be what it really is not, is called a prejudice, and is one of those things which it is very hard for any one to get the better of; suicide, for instance, is deemed by some silly people to be a terrible sin, upon the authority, it may be, of this Commandment: and they will dispute upon it, as long as you please; for a wise man, like a country justice, had much rather have the worst of an argument, than the good sense to own it. But no man is fit to live in the world, who does not know how to manage a fool; and the best way to keep him quiet, is never to contradict him; and if you always let him pass for a very wise person, he will look upon you

you to be the most ingenious man in the universe, except himself. Few of the fools we meet with, in the world, are absolutely born such but have neglected their minds as some abject slovens neglect their persons; and as the latter are too idle to keep themselves clean, the former, upon the same account, take no pains to make themselves wise. Et rude quid profit non video ingenium.

Young men in the reversion of great estates are very hardly dealt by in this vexatious statute.—They cannot give so much as five guineas to a cook, to pack off a troublesome old gentleman to the regions of the blessed. Such of the choice spirits of the age, who are impatient to strike some bold strokes whilst their blood is warm, and their days at the best, look upon those crazy old souls, that go by the name of their fathers, (and, indeed, I think their reputed sons might knock most of them on the head, without being guilty of parricide), as little else than a sort of incumbrance upon *their* estates, and think that the sooner they were out of the way the better. More especially so, when a great many of these fine young dogs are so pressed by their creditors on one side, and their harlots and bastards on the other, that they live in a sort of whirlwind, and cannot fix their faces to any given point for a moment,

ment, without seeing very good reason, not knowing which way to look, to tack about to another. Much are they grieved by this law, and, moreover, a vast many very proper young men, the more is the pity, are shut up in prisons, where their bodies are kept in pawn for the payment of their debts, whilst their fathers are rolling in money and luxury, and will not so much as put their hands into their pockets, to let loose so much mischief upon the world. And it may be deemed the safest way to keep their sons chained up, like mastiffs, in order to make them the fiercer, in case of an invasion. At which time, their spirit of rapine, plunder and murder may be well directed towards the enemies of their country, and instead of debauching men's wives and daughters, and shooting their husbands, brothers and fathers in duels, they may discharge their pistols, perhaps, to a better purpose, at the common foe. Lest I may be thought to decorate these fine geniuses with praises undeserved, in the attributing to their virtues the spirit of rapine and plunder, it ought not to be forgotten that men of very good fashion make a practice of going upon the highway.

Observations upon the Seventh Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

IF the law had stood written thus, "Thou shalt not eat," it might have been kept, perhaps, by such as had lost their appetites. But, jesting apart, how can it be said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," when every body knows that adultery is the final cause of marriage? It stands in one edition, "Thou shalt commit adultery," which is assuredly the genuine reading. I shall be laughed at for supposing that the fine Ladies have any such thing as a prayer-book in their libraries; but if they should have, I make no doubt, from their practice, but that the Commandment stands written in their edition without any negative in it at all. Otherwise, who would marry the bed-ridden, the cripple, the deformed, the diseased, the unnatural, the impotent and the aged, for titles, distinction, splendour, and large settlements, if the Ladies might not commit adultery as often as they thought fit? There are so many objections which offer themselves against this Commandment, that I am really at a loss, which to lay before

fore the reader first : I have said, that adultery is the final cause of marriage, the end of the institution ; by what means the monosyllable NOT could have crept into this Commandment, I cannot conceive ; for how can it be possible that adultery should be forbidden, when every wife couple marry for the sake of money ? That is, in order the woman may be made the best market of. Man and wife in this business act the part of skilful bird-catchers ; the man is the decoy, the woman the net ; the rich young fool the game. The consequences are evident ; they take care the proofs shall be good, make a fuss and a show about separation and divorce, *and enjoy themselves in private over the booty*. A court of justice is not always a necessary engine in these matters, unless the young cully grows obstinate, and will not pay the damages in demand ; in such cases he must be put into the press of the law, and the money must be squeezed out of him. Adultery is certainly one of the most lucrative trades among us, and, were it to be put down by law, a great many very fine folks must put down their town houses and their gay carriages, sell their plate and jewels, and be glad to live in snug cottages upon the goose-commons in the country. The rage for gaming among the ladies proceeds upon

this principle ; a rich young fellow, who has much to lose, very seldom gets any money, if he happens to be on the winning side ; for, in proportion as a lady gets deep in debt, she grows fond of the winner, and a few hints soon tell a coxcomb what is the matter ; which, indeed, any man who was not very vain of his own sweet person and graces would never construe in his own favour. — But modesty forbids me to follow our female gamester any further :—Suffice it to say, that the young gallant finds very prompt payment ; and the lady, if she has any beauty, has not the least occasion to draw upon her husband's or her father's banker to pay her debts of HONOUR. Hence the frequency of those advertisements in the news-papers, so full of humanity to such of the sex who may stand in need of a *temporary retirement*. These are the refined pleasures of those who move in an exalted sphere, and shine the stars of the first magnitude in the firmament of fashion. But I cannot do them justice in prose, and shall therefore leave their praises to be set in the jewels and the pearls of eloquence, by the Poets and the fine Gentlemen. The example which they exhibit to the rest of the world, is what I must take all the pains in my power to recommend to the imitation of all such, who are religiously and devoutly

devoutly disposed, by every argument. No woman can possibly set herself off to the best advantage, unless she lays all modesty aside, and reserves nothing but the pretence of it: no man, unless he does the same by his honour. The chief thing in which fine breeding and manners consist, is the passing off the counterfeit with a good air, and defending the deceit at the risk of life itself: a man of the nicest honour may tell a lie, a dozen if it suits his purpose; if he cannot gain a beautiful woman any other way for instance, there is no dishonour in telling a lie; the dishonour consists in the putting up with being told that one has done so. Thus a fine Lady may make a dozen trips without injuring her virtue; for, in the first place, she cannot hurt what she has not, and, if need be, she may defend her pretence to it, by an action at law. But if a man really possesses honour, or a woman modesty, it is high time they were in Heaven; for I am sure, they are not fit to live in such a world as this is. However difficult a thing it may be for virtuous women, and men of integrity, to live in a world full of rascals and prostitutes, some there are, I find, who have courage so to do, and those too united by so true affection to each other, that they seem to me to be a great deal more happy within the small

circles of their little families, than are they who have all the pleasures and luxuries at their command. How they contrive this, is best known to themselves; but I know that they take a very different course from the splendid rabble of fashion, and, as man and wife, would choose rather to die than be untrue to each other. I shall mention the few things which I have taken notice of concerning these odd folks, and leave my reader to form what opinions he pleases upon them. These men and women I have noted with some curiosity are always very plain and neat in their dress, and observe the same moderation in every thing else; in defiance of all ridicule, they make a practice of saying their prayers, and of going to church on a Sunday with their families: the men, instead of getting drunk, and the women, instead of entertaining routs and card-parties on Sunday nights, employ their time in instructing themselves and their families in Religion and Virtue. The women stay a great deal at home, and are not too high to look into domestic matters; the men are very much employed in taking care of, and improving their estates, and regulating their expences to such a measure, as to be enabled to pay to every man his due, out of the fruits of them. Some of these women are
extremely

extremely beautiful, and have a way of keeping their fine complexions a great while longer than those Ladies who lay out so much money in washes, paint and poultices; and the only cosmetics they use, are temperance and exercise: and what is very extraordinary, although they are so handsome, they are not at all proud of being seen; and if any man offers to flatter their beauties, they either laugh at him for a fool, or are very much displeased with him for offering such an insult to their good sense as to praise them to their faces. Not even finery itself, which other women had much rather die than be without, has any effect upon them: if they have any money to spare, after having purchased themselves such plain suits of clothes as they usually put on, a strange custom! they lay it out in charities: and, reader, wilt thou believe me when I tell thee, that when these women marry, they marry because they are in love!—and fix their affections upon such men as one would naturally think, of all others, the least likely to become favourites of the ladies; odd stupid creatures, who go to church, say their prayers, and keep God's Commandments.

Observations upon the Eighth Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

LET no man be honest, unless he is sure that he shall be very well paid for it. Honesty is very bad policy, and is only called the best, by men of sense, when it is most profitable. I will say, and with great confidence, that they who are so excessively fine-mouthed, as to feel a disrelish to every thing, which is not strictly just and honest, are not very likely to grow fat, and to prosper in the world; whatever they may think of it. Your honest men generally look vastly meager, and appear to be shockingly out of condition, which gives me good reason to conclude, that honesty keeps but a very indifferent table. If ragged coats, and empty bellies, are the only things which honesty can comfort a man with, I must needs say, that it is high time that honesty were kicked out of society. I shall give very good advice, I think, when I recommend it to every one to consider, what it is that makes most for his own interest, before any thing else; and if money may be put into a man's pocket, I advise him never to

to think ill of the means, as long as the end is good. If a man has any commercial dealings with another, he will do well to overreach him in any bargain he possibly can: thus he gets a double victory over him, the one in wit, the other in profit. To get as much as he can, is a duty which every one owes to himself and family: and he never ought to stick at any lie, which is likely to make him a richer man. It may be said, that, if he be discovered in any cheat, no man will have any dealings with him, in future; it is an absurdity to think so; for if one oath will not do, a dozen will: he has nothing to do but to swear that he has seen the error of his ways; that he has been, to be sure, a sad rogue; but that times are altered, he is now grown older, and finds that it is best to be honest. To think that there be any use in real honesty, is a very dangerous mistake; the utility consists in the making a pretence of it. Now this is the very point, of all others, in which people err so grossly with respect to every rule in Religion and Morality: the art lies in this, in the passing themselves upon the world for moral and religious characters, in order that they may cheat one another with the greater security. But to return to the Commandment; the Spartans, a very ingenious people, acted very wisely in not pun-

nishing any one for stealing, but for the stealing in so clumsy a manner as to be detected in the theft. Cornelius Agrippa, the Magician, in his book de Vanitate Scientiarum, remarks, that Theodorus the Philosopher, who was honoured with the title of a Deity, was of opinion, that the truly wise man would not hesitate to commit adultery, sacrilege, or theft, when occasion suited: for there is not any of these things which are in their natures evil, but only in the opinions of the vulgar, and a wise man might pick a pocket without hurting his credit. Theodorus, it must be confessed, was a very good moral Philosopher, and saw things in a better light than many others, who were called by that name; and I cannot but think that his principles are likely to be of infinite use to all civilized societies. But we have got a trick here in England, of hanging all we can catch of this sect of philosophers; and I have good reasons for thinking, if Theodorus himself, the founder of the sect, were in existence amongst us, and should undertake to practise his experimental philosophy in Great Britain, that, unless he were a very acute logician, he would find an *hempen balter* would be rather too hard for him in argument.

But however, I would not have scoundrels
discomfited;

discomfited; and if any have the luck to be pulled neck and heels into a court of justice, not to be cast down upon it; and if a rope should happen to get the better of their throats in the dispute, let me advise them not to disgrace the Devil's clock by making bad pendulums.

If the committing one crime brings a man into danger, he will do right not to leave off, because if one fault brings him into hazard, another will save his neck; therefore I would advise him to go on until he has made his ground good again.

An honest man is no better than a fool upon many accounts; the odds are always against him: an active, ingenious rogue will pick all the teeth out of his head, and his money out of his pocket, whilst he stands considering what is fitting to be done. The honesty of other men is the best defence that a villain has; in them the weakest part, since a man who is honest himself is more apt to think others so than a rascal, who takes it for granted that every one will be rogue if he can, and therefore keeps a sharper look out, and is less plundered. An honest man is the best defence a rogue has; because, until he has been proved to be a knave, he will defend him the longest; and the laws themselves always lean towards mercy.

Obfer-

Observations upon the Ninth Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST
THY NEIGHBOUR.

WHEN we consider that merit of any sort is a very detestable thing, whether it consists in the excellencies of virtue, great scholarship, the right use of genius or the like, calumny and detraction, which beat it down, and help to suffocate it whenever they meet with it, should by no means be forbidden by any law: forasmuch as the chief weapons are thus wrested out of the hands of the scoundrel, which give the deepest wounds to the beauties of the most accomplished characters. Men of superiour talents and worth would get a great deal too high above other people's heads, if there were no rascals to depreciate, and bear false witness against them; and when the account of some eminent person comes to hand well qualified and dashed with frequent strokes of malevolence, folks are not apt to feel so much uneasiness when his name is mentioned, but are vastly relieved at the thoughts of his many imperfections. But, let us consider calumny in another point of view; as it
is

is the coward's only means of revenge, and of all others the safest, because the person against whom the dastard shews his malice, is out of the way when the blow is given. He bears false witness against his neighbour in security, without any fear of the horse-whip or the pillory ; for there is not one in a thousand, although a man may have a thousand friends, who will be at the hazard of telling him the name of the villain, who has shot at him in the dark. There are a great many generous people in the world, who will do a vast number of kind things in which there is no danger ; but will not risk so much as the loss of a penny for the salvation of one half of the universe. And nobody can blame them for that ; for what man, in his right senses, would not sooner let his neighbour's house burn to the earth in silence, than call him out of his bed to stop the flames, if he thought he should lose a farthing by telling him that his premises were all in a blaze ? All the advantages of detraction are not readily to be counted out ; the spirit of calumny, like the stink of putrefaction, strikes upon the sense whether you will or no, and brings many an insignificant coxcomb into notice, that we should otherwise have passed by, like a dead carcase in a ditch, without observation, did not the
noise

noise of the one, and the stench of the other, bring us acquainted with both. Cowards, I say, have no other way of executing their vengeance upon any one who has given them offence, than by detraction; and every word that comes out of their mouths is as venomous as a chewed bullet, the wound of which is said to be almost incurable.

But, further, this Commandment may be said to extend to lies told, with the ceremony of kissing a Bible, in the courts of justice, to which the law gives the complex term, perjury.—If by virtue of this Commandment perjury is no longer to be practised either within or without the courts, I am troubled to think how many honest men will lose their bread. And it would be a very great hardship upon them to deny them the uses of perjury, when they have the fortitude to run such risks to get their living, that they seldom put a shilling into their pockets, without deserving to have their ears spiked to the pillory.

Observations upon the Tenth Commandment.

THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE,
NOR HIS WIFE, &c.

THE Legislator, one would think, might have been contented with a man's not stealing his neighbour's goods, committing adultery with his wife, or running away with his daughter; but to protract the law to such an extravagant measure, as to make it even a sin to covet any thing that is his, certainly is little else than making a sin of a good appetite. If it were possible to behold a man rolling in a gilded chariot, incrusted in pearls and embroidery, abounding in riches, and rioting in luxuries, getting drunk with Burgundy every day, and tumbling about upon costly Ægyptian carpets, surrounded with a banditti of powdered servants well paid for their trouble of eating and drinking, and all other hard labour, blessed with as many Concubines as King Solomon in all his glory, living so much at his ease as to have gentlemen to dress him and to undress him, to wipe his nose and put him into his bed, indulging his body as the seasons suit with hot and cold baths, pickling his limbs in
perfumes

perfumes and sweet unguents, as if he were afraid that the crows should mistake him for carrion ; add to this, his fine house in town and his fine house in the country, his parks full of fat venison, his cellars of the richest wines, his tables loaded with every thing of the best, his apartments full of musick, sweet essences and magnificent furniture—if it were possible, I say, to behold all these fine sights, and not covet any thing that is his, the Commandment might sit easier upon the shoulders of mankind : but, as matters are, I believe it to be thought a very heavy yoke by most people, who could find it in their hearts to take such a man as I have just described, by the throat, and squeeze his soul out of his body to get possession of those things which are his, if they did not pay very good respect to the gallows. To such as these the above Commandment must needs be a more intolerable nuisance, than any that was ever removed by a writ of *ad quod damnum*.

Thus, reader, I have briefly touched upon every one of the Commandments in their turns, and have given very good reasons why they should every one of them be abolished : and I dare say that you, Sir, and every other person of good sense will agree with me in thinking, that the world would
feel

feel itself much more at its ease, and at its liberty, without them. But lest I should be misunderstood by a very august body of men, for whose approbation I hunger and thirst, I mean the Free-thinkers, I think fit to say, for fear they should conceive themselves and their principles bitterly derided, in my thus seeming to make a jest of God's laws, in order that they should pay for it, that it is a fool's part to fall into suspicions when there is no occasion: and in order that the Profligates of this age may put their trust in me for their champion, I further add, that it is my intention soon to write a serious essay upon the excellencies and truth of the Christian Religion. But if I am in danger of being suspected of the *acetum in pectore* by the Profligates and Free-thinkers, to such a degree as to put them in doubt, whether it be quite safe for them to laugh with me at Religion and Morality, I may on the other hand be deemed a defender of the faith, and of the divine canons, by some deep-discerning men, who, *ες κυνος πυγην βλεψαντες και τριων Αλωπεκων*, have better eyes in their heads than not to see when they have got a jest on their own side of the question. *Ουτοι μεν οι χρησοι πολλα φαινονται της συμμαχης κακα ωπεποιηκοτες· ημεις δ' οι φαυλοι, αγαθων αυτοις αιτιοι κατασαντες.*

P O S T S C R I P T.

AN observation occurs in p. 9. l. 3. which may be deemed, by some people, a piece of unqualified satire; than which, surely, nothing can be more unjust or malevolent. I would have it noted, therefore, that if it be thought such, it is not intended by the writer so to be; since a man who never has been taught any thing may not be to blame for not knowing it: but he that has been taught any thing, and, after having carelessly lost it, still pretends to know it, is the person aimed at in the observation.

T H E E N D.

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Some observations on the
inconvenience of the ten
commandments

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